

Jeffrey Bannon, Chair person
Jonathan Anderson, Vice Chair
David Hall, Clerk
Jesse Limanek
Wendy M. Mead



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James A. Smith, Town Manager

Town of Sutton
Select Board

Meeting Minutes

Minutes Accepted and filed with the Town Clerk 3/21/2023 a roll call vote of 4-0-1
(Select person Mead abstains-absent 3/7/23 meeting)

6:00 p.m. – March 7, 2023

Roll Call vote taken:

Members in Attendance in person:

Chairperson Jeff Bannon, Vice Chair Jonathan Anderson, Clerk David Hall, Select member Jesse Limanek
Select person Wendy Mead absent.

Also in attendance in person: Town Manager James Smith, Town Accountant Tim Harrison & Deb Jacques, secretary

Chairperson Bannon recites the following: Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, this meeting of the Sutton Select Board is in a hybrid format with both in-person and Zoom component. To join the meeting visit www.zoom.us/join and enter Meeting ID 884 4439 9626/Passcode: 740005. The meeting will be broadcast and recorded on local public access station (Verizon 31 & Charter/Spectrum 191) and live streamed on the Towns YouTube channel when available.

Public Forum – John Hebert 23 Singletary Ave- here to speak in favor of the WRRB request to increase the retirees with a 2% increase on the 1st \$16,000.- John states 23 of 34 towns must vote yes. This would still be below the inflation rates. John mentions the reporting done earlier today by Jerome Powell- discussing the interest rates. John states this would be a help to the low income retirees. John mentions the high cost of fuel and wonders how many retirees have to decide on paying a fuel bill, getting medication or buying food. John urges the Select Board to pass the requested 2% increase.

Select person Hall motions to accept as presented the February 21, 2023 Select Board meeting minutes Vice Chair Anderson seconds passes 4-0 with roll call vote. (Select person Mead absent)

Select person Hall motions to accept the February 21, 2023 Executive Session minutes as presented not to be released at this time

Select person Limanek seconds passes 4-0 with roll call vote

Associate member to the Conservation Commission- Jared Duval- Jared is present tonight- Town Manager Smith introduces Jared to the Board- this will be an associate position. Jim states he is a licensed engineer & soil evaluator and currently works as a DPW director. Jared speaks to the board- he has been a resident for 2 years and is interested in the development going on- Jared states he would like to honor and preserve the natural beauty in town. He looks forward to lending his insights to the Conservation Commission. The board all welcome Jared and thank him for volunteering- the town cannot do much without volunteers. Select person Limanek motions to approve Jared Duval to the Conservation Commission as an Associate member with a term to expire June 30, 2025, Vice Chair Anderson seconds passes 4-0 with roll call vote.

Common Vic renewal- Mad Dogs Food Trailer- 25 Providence Road- Kevin Brown- Town Manager Smith says this is a renewal but it is seasonal- the Board of Health will inspect prior to opening. The board are all complimentary to this local small business which opened last year. Vice Chair Anderson motions to approve the Common Victualler for Mad Dogs Food Trailer located at 25 Providence Road- Kevin Brown- owner- Select person Hall seconds passes 4-0 with roll call vote

Worcester Regional Retirement System- request for additional COLA- Towns that pay in to Worc Regional Retirement were notified in December 2022 that WRRB voted to approve an additional one time 2% COLA per MGL 269 Acts of 2022. Retirees received a 3% increase on July 1, 2022- this 2% if approved would be on the 1st \$16,000. paid to retirees. Two thirds of the 66 member towns must approve to pass. If passed the impact would begin FY2026 with an additional \$23,700. paid to WRRB. If the pension is fully funded in

FY 2036 the full liability of this 2% increase would total \$319,200. If this is passed by participating communities it would be retroactive to July 1, 2023. The average increase would be approx. \$320. over the 12-month period. Select person Hall says the contribution that will be paid out at the end of this is a fairly significant amount but with the current rate of inflation it is hard to not support- Dave feels we can afford to do this. Select person Limanek asks for a breakdown of communities that have supported this- Town Manager Smith replies the few towns he heard back from such as Upton and Douglas have voted no- Millbury has requested a presentation to the Select Board by the Worc. Retirement Board. Northbridge has their own retirement system but they did give a 5% increase this year. Jesse states financially it is not a big ask but it is still an ask- it is sustained liability going forward. Budgetarily we have other needs that must be addressed but it is hard to say no to town retirees that have done their jobs well. Jesse questions what if they do this again next year- Town Manager Smith states hopefully this is a onetime thing. Social Security went up 7-8 % as a onetime increase. Vice Chair Anderson reviews the impact- he asks if 3% is high for an increase- Town Manager Smith replies no it is fairly standard. This 2% increase resulting in \$320,000. will be paid off over a 13-year period beginning in FY26. Jonathan questions the discussion recently about the financial cliff- does this effect that- Jim replies yes but not by much. Chairperson Bannon has gone back and forth with this – Jeff says it would be easy to just say no but this will benefit the lower paid retirees that live on a fixed income- these are individuals that worked for a long time for the town without a lot of complaining- Jeff is in favor. Select person Hall motions to accept the provisions of Chapter 269 of the Acts of 2022, which consistent with the Worcester Regional Retirement Board's December 20, 2022 vote, will provide for an additional 2% cost-of-living increase for eligible Worcester Regional Retirement System retirees, retroactive to July 1, 2022, Select person Limanek seconds passes 4-0 with roll call vote.

3-year reappointment Finance Director/Town Accountant Tim Harrison: Town Manager Smith is looking for the board to ratify the appointment due to take effect July 1, 2023 and run thru June 30, 2026. Jim goes on to say he is a valuable member of the team and has only positive things to say about Tim and his contributions to the town – “Tim is an asset to the town and a leader of our Financial team”. Tim Harrison- 7 Burnap Road - is present and thanks the board for the continued support. Tim states he has just started his 29th year working for the town- this will be his last reappointment. Tim states it is great working with Jim and has been a pleasure working with the various Select Boards, Finance Comm. We now have a great partnership with the new School Superintendent and the Business Manager but we are entering some fiscal uncertainty- we will face some challenges over the next few years. Select person Hall has worked with Tim for a long time and has learned a lot from him. Dave appreciates what Tim has passed along – the board benefits greatly and is happy to support his reappointment. Select person Limanek goes back years ago when he (Jesse) sat on the School Committee and Tim was in his current position. There were cuts at the school due to budget- Tim stepped up and helped always looking down the road. We cannot codify the value you bring to the town. Vice Chair Anderson says 29 years of the conservative approach- you work well with Jim- your hard work has paid off. Hopefully by the time you step down we will be beyond the financial cliff. You should begin thinking of a succession plan – we will need expertise when you leave in 3 years. Chairperson Bannon agrees with a succession plan- expertise in municipal accounting is totally a different language. Jeff appreciates and has confidence in what Tim brings to the table- if and when Tim leaves there will be big shoes to fill. Select person Limanek motions to approve the 3-year reappointment of Tim Harrison as the Financial Director/Town Accountant for the Town of Sutton effective July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2026 select person Hall seconds passes 4-0 with roll call vote.

Town Manager Update:

- FY24 Gov. State Aid- Gov. Healey released the state aid numbers- the net cherry sheet number is \$16,151. We received an increase in Chap. 70 of \$38,820. And UGGA was \$18,085. Sutton is 1 of 19 communities that are minimum aid communities and receive \$30. Per student. We will continue to work with our delegation to increase state aid.
- Healthcare numbers- met 2/28 with MIIA rep- our increase will be 6.4%- we had placed an 8% increase as a placeholder.
- Officer Matt Pepin has accepted a spot in the MA State Police Academy. This position will be posted- we wish Matt well.
- Town Meeting Warrant – draft warrant will be before the board April 4th, final for signing will be on April 18th.
- Fin Com Public Hearings will be Wed. March 22 @ 6:30; Thurs. March 23 @ 6:30 and Tues. April 11 @ 6:30

Announcement's/Round Table:

- Select person Hall reads an announcement of a Clothing Drive Project 351 put on by Edith Tufts.
- Select person Limanek reads an announcement regarding the Village meeting in Manchaug- MVP grant to be held on March 16th at Blaxton Mills to discuss flooding in that area of town. A third meeting will take place on April 27th. Jesse met with Michelle at the Sr. Center today to ask about the needs for the Food Pantry- the needs are minimal at this time but soaps & cleaning supplies are always needed. There will be a Super Meat raffle at the Dudley Gendron on April 15th with all proceeds benefiting the Food Pantry. Jesse attended the School Base Incident gathering at the school put together by Fire Chief Matt Belsito along with FEMA, Federal Agents, Fire Fighters and Police- great job Matt.
- Vice Chair Anderson reads the public notice organized by Anna Wence for the 2nd Annual Earth Day Clean up.
- Select person Bannon wishes the Boys and Girls Basketball teams luck in the playoffs.

Select person Limanek motions to adjourn, Vice Chair Anderson seconds- Roll Call vote taken- passes 4-0

Meeting adjourned 7:12 pm

